

FACULTY OF MUSIC UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Contemporary Music Ensemble

ROBIN ENGELMAN,
Conductor

Thursday, December 6, 1990

8:00 pm

Walter Hall

PROGRAM

Fulgurance I (1986)

François Morel

Jane MacKay, horn

Stephen Clarke, piano; Amy Lee, harp; Jeremy Hughes, cello;
Martina Kurth, alto flute; Jacqueline McCaig, Jon Saulnier, percussion

A Flower (1950)

John Cage

Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs (1942)

from *Finnegans Wake*, James Joyce

Night by silent sailing night

Isobel

Wildwoods eyes and primarose hair

Quietly all the woods so wild

In mauves of moss and daphne dews

How all so still she lay

'neath of the white thorn

child of tree

like some lost happy leaf

like blowing flower stilled

As fain would she anon

For soon again 'twill be

win me

woo me

wed me

Ah! weary me deeply

Now even calm lay sleeping

Night Isobel,

Sister Isobel,

Saintette Isobel,

Madame Isa

Veuve la belle.

another comes from *5 Contralto Songs* (1938)
text by e. e. cummings

Tumbling hair picker of buttercups
violets dandelions
And the big bullying daisies
through the field wonderful
with eyes a little sorry
Another comes
also picking flowers

Shelagh Tyreman, voice; Stephen Clarke, piano

Far calls. Coming, far! (1988)

John Burke

Martina Kurth, flute/piccolo; Heidi Postl, oboe; Linda Switt, clarinet; Catherine MacDonnell, bassoon; Tim Birtch, trumpet; Jane MacKay, Sam King, horn; Ross Harwell, bass trombone; Jacqueline McCaig, Jon Saulnier, percussion; Stephen Clarke, piano

Intermission

For Alina (1976)

Arvo Pärt

Stephen Clarke, piano

Fratres (1977)

Arvo Pärt

Erika Raum, violin; Stephen Clarke, piano

Intégrales (1926)

Edgar Varèse

Jennifer Hellen, Martina Kurth, piccolo; Heidi Postl, oboe; Arthur Luck, Eb clarinet; Linda Switt, Bb clarinet; Jane MacKay, Sam King, horn; Tim Birtch, Curtis Dietz, trumpet; Rob Tilley, Ross Harwell, trombone; Alex Kidston, tuba; Brian Joyce, bass; Jacqueline McCaig, Jon Saulnier, Craig Hunter, Morris Palter, percussion

NOTES

Fulgerance I

François Morel

Commissioned by Radio-Canada to celebrate my sixtieth birthday, the occasion seemed to me to be an opportune one to pay homage to the first Quebec "school", of which the international transcription service of Radio Canada had established ten years ago a collection of recordings comprised of several of their works: Serge Garant, François Morel, Bruce Mather and Gilles Tremblay. From the initials of their names (and the repetition in reverse of the intervals thus obtained) according to the regular code of notation by letter and that of Messiaen's communication language, materials evolved to which other principal motives were added. The work is scored for an ensemble comprised of alto flute, horn, cello, piano, harp, and percussion. The score contains two lines excerpted from "Il fait clair de glaise" by Maurice Beaulieu:

"Je suis l'aisance de l'arbre

Le froid ne m'atteint plus que pour mieux me créer"

Note by the composer

A Flower

John Cage

Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs another comes

John Cage's work to 1952, the year of the notorious notation-free 4'33", traced a path of increasing subtraction culminating in silence. This process marks the three songs on this program. The chromatic *Five Songs for Contralto* on texts by e. e. cummings are a reminder of his composition lessons with Schoenberg which began in autumn, 1934. (Cage was told that his weak sense of harmony would cause him difficulties.) The better-known setting of James Joyce, *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs*, dates from 1942. The voice is restricted to three notes, chanted in an abstracted folk-song style. By way of accompaniment, the piano, closed, is reduced to a percussion instrument. *Finnegans Wake* was a literary source to which Cage would not return for nearly forty years. *A Flower* dispenses with text as well. An early dance collaboration, this vocalise is in fact the "fauna" counterpart to the dancer's "flora". As with *The Wonderful Widow*, the limited vocal range is meant to be transposed to an octave low and comfortable for the singer.

Note by Bruce Kirkpatrick Hill

Far calls. Coming, Far!

John Burke

Far calls. Coming, far! was commissioned by the Société de musique contemporaine du Québec and received its first performance on a concert given as part of the 1988 Olympic Arts Festival in Calgary. The title is taken from James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and is an expression of what the music attempts to convey in sound: the image of fanfarelike calls echoing, reverberating and moving through a frozen landscape. A single chord (based on the typical fanfare interval of a fourth) generates all the musical material while being viewed from shifting acoustic perspectives as the piece progresses. The result is an underlying sense of spaciousness in the midst of considerable activity.

J.B.

John Burke studied composition with Bruce Mather at McGill University, with Eugene Kurtz in Paris, and at the University of Michigan, where he received his doctorate. The recipient of numerous awards and commissions, he has had his music performed by major new music groups, orchestras, and solo artists throughout Canada, in the United States and Europe, and at major festivals including Metz and the ISCM World Music Days. Besides his activities as a composer, John Burke has taught music theory and electronic music at various universities and currently teaches composition at the University of Victoria, British Columbia. Future projects include a piece for the Duo Contemporain of Holland, a piano trio, and a one-act opera based on the strange but factual story of John Hu, a Chinese brought to France from Canton in 1722 by a returning French missionary.

Für Alina Fratres

Arvo Pärt

The Estonian Arvo Pärt, who was born in Paide and grew up in Tallinn, does not come from an especially religious background. Nevertheless his piety, a type of subjective religiosity, has a connection with the type of society that now characterizes the Soviet Union - the country where he lived until 1980. His works *Credo*, *St. John's Passion*, *Cantus*, *Tabula rasa*, *Annum per annum*, *Fratres*, *Missa*, *Cantate Domino*, *Summa*, *De Profundis* - are all "works of suffering" that at the same time transcend their character. Arvo Pärt's music tends to extremes. One senses its roots and its spirit, but the structure of the music is harder to grasp. A curious union of historical master-craftsmanship and modern 'gestus', it is music that could have been written 250 years ago and yet could only be composed today. It is Vivaldi and Erik Satie, an impressive 'musique pauvre' that has discarded all its

structural moorings - music whose sparse tones are so intensified that any and all sense of the lackadaisical is eliminated, music that just as it is about to die away, blooms with infatuation. "That is my goal. Time and timelessness are connected. This instant and eternity are struggling within us. And this is the cause of all of our contradictions, our obstinacy, our narrow-mindedness, our faith and our grief."

In 1976 he published a small piano piece, *For Alina* - a simple composition of extreme high and low notes, open intervals and pedal notes - a quiet and beautiful piece of music. "That was the first piece that was on a new plateau. It was here that I discovered the triad series, which I made my simple, little guiding rule." *Fratres* is dated 1977 and was first performed by the Estonian ensemble of early music "Hortus musicus." On a commission from the 1980 Salzburg Festival, Arvo Pärt wrote variations on the theme of this composition. These were performed by Gidon and Elena Kremer - to whom the work is dedicated - on August 17, 1980 in Salzburg. Later in Berlin, Pärt wrote a version of the piece for The Twelve Cellists of the Berlin Philharmonic which came a closer to the original composition: music for three voices above a pedal point for seven early or modern instruments and percussion.

In the original version as well as in the cello arrangement the pedal point - the open fifth A-E - was sustained throughout the entire piece. In the variations, which have added an independent violin prelude at the beginning, the two-measure percussion inserts have been replaced by piano chords and new intervals have replaced the pedal point. In the initial version, the work's six-measure theme is repeated nine times, coming in often a minor or major third lower - it is repeated eight times in the cello version. The sequence of entrances yields the scale e-c-a-f-d-b-g-e-c sharp. In one instance, this pattern of six measures is interrupted by two 6/4 percussion measures, in another instance by a two-measure piano ostinato. Within the theme, the sequence of 7/4, 9/4 and 11/4 measures corresponds to the principle of adding on - and the theme's melodic structure is developed according to this principle. The schematic of this composition, its numerical relationships, and its easily discernable syntax give the effect of a semi-transparent screen. One can easily enter in to it, but in doing so the work does not begin to give itself away. *Note by Wolfgang Sandner*

Intégrales

Edgar Varèse

The early works of Edgar Varèse were destroyed in a warehouse fire in 1913. Most of the dozen pieces that made his reputation as an innovator were composed in the United States. Varèse's early years took him from Paris to Turin, Berlin, and at the age of thirty New York, where he began to promote concerts of contemporary music not only by Schoenberg, Webern and Stravinsky, but by the American composers Ruggles and Cowell. His own *Hyperprism*, *Octandre* and *Intégrales* were given under these auspices. *Intégrales*, premiered by Stowkowski on March 1, 1925, is a landmark of music conceived in terms of shifting masses of sound. In this respect the work anticipates experiments with electronic media in the middle of the century. His use of a wide variety of unpitched sounds, taken to the extreme in his later, hugely influential *Ionisation*, is typical of Varèse's technique of pitting one group of instruments against another. "Taking the place of old fixed linear counterpoint," he wrote, "you will find in my works the movement of masses, varying in radiance, and of different densities and volumes. Note by Bruce Kirkpatrick Hill

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